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Sen. Birkholz's meth legislation becomes law

LANSING – Sen. Patty Birkholz's effort to control the spread of methamphetamine abuse by restricting the sale of the drug's prime components became law today after the governor signed it.

"Meth abuse has spread quickly in our state, especially in rural areas," said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. "With this law, we're keeping our communities safer from meth by curbing the ease with which meth cooks can obtain its prime ingredients from commonly sold cold medications."

Under Birkholz's Public Act 87, all stores that sell pseudoephedrine or ephedrine as the sole active ingredient would be allowed to sell two packages a day, with exceptions for liquids and pediatric products. Buyers would have to show photo I.D., be 18 years or older and sign a log with name, address and purchase information. Products included in the legislation would have to be kept behind a counter or within 20 feet of a counter. A sign would be posted stating the law.

Since 1996, the number of meth labs in Michigan increased 181 percent. And new research has shown that many people become addicted after the first use and 90 percent of those who use meth twice become addicted. Similar legislation in Oklahoma resulted in more than a 70 percent decrease in meth production.

Chronic meth abuse can lead to psychotic behavior, including intense paranoia, hallucinations and rages. Because of the toxic waste produced in the production process, meth labs are considered hazardous waste sites. For every pound of meth produced, 5 to 6 pounds of toxic waste is produced. This waste is almost always illegal dumped.

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